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# ARCHEOLOGICAL REMAINS ON THE COAST OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND SOUTHERN ALASKA

By HARLAN I. SMITH

ON my hasty archeological reconnaissance of the North Pacific coast, between Seattle and Skagway, carried on during July, August, and September, for the American Museum of Natural History, I endeavored to locate sites for future exploration north of the region examined for the Jesup North Pacific Expedition in 1897-1899 and for the American Museum of Natural History in 1903. The previous work had carried the reconnaissance as far north as Fort Rupert in northern Vancouver island.

New evidence of the distribution of chipped artifacts and interior culture, consisting of two large chipped points and a steatite pipe, apparently modern, were found in Bellacoola, as described in the last issue of this journal. The chipped objects found in a gravel deposit, possibly very old, mark, so far as known, the most northerly distribution of such objects on the coast of British Columbia. The location of an ancient village site and a wooden fish trap near Bellacoola are mentioned in the same paper.

A stone hammer of sub-cylindrical form, that is, oval in cross section (no. 16.1-405), found near Bellacoola by Mr B. Filip Jacobsen, was given by him to me. It is of gray slate-like rock, pecked into form and polished unusually smooth for such an object. One end is particularly smooth, only slightly convex, and meets the periphery at nearly a right angle without any sign of intentional rounding; the other, presumably of similar shape, is broken off, apparently from use. Similar hammers were collected by us on the northern end of Vancouver island.

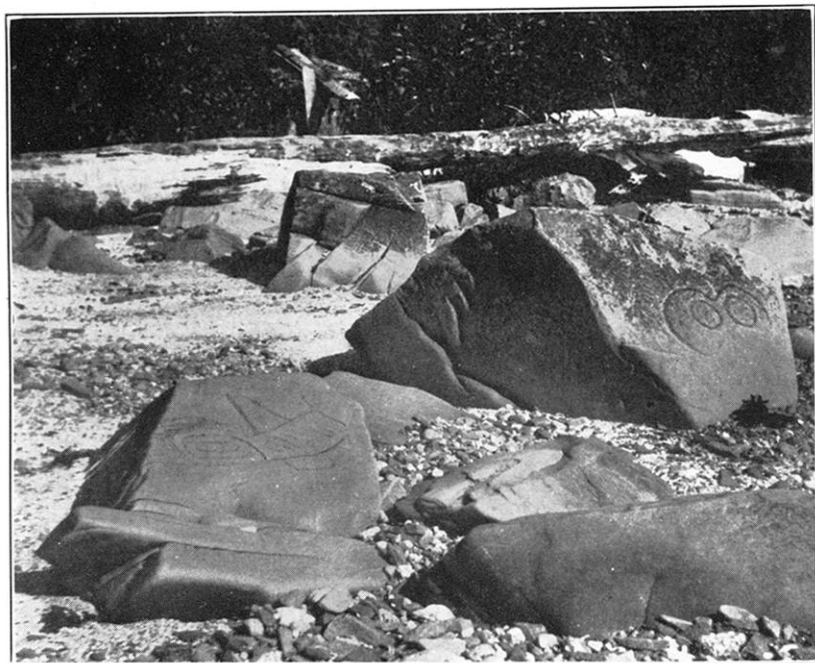
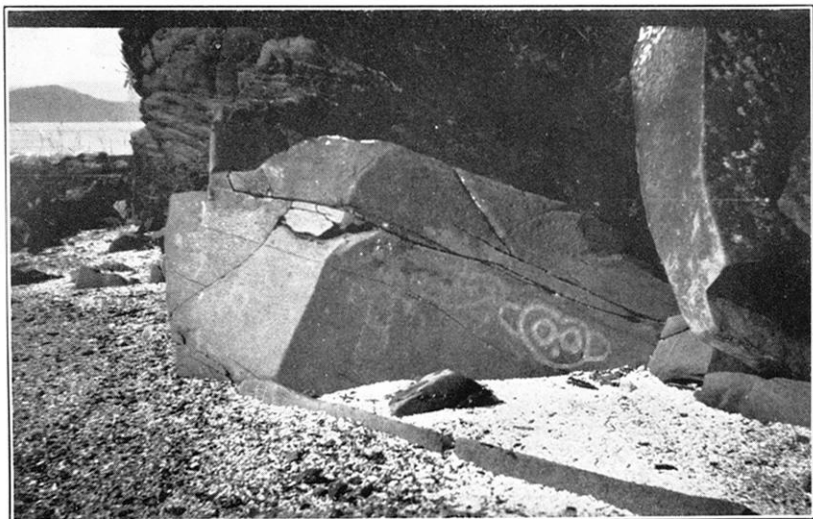
On the northern side of Skeena river, on the right-of-way of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad, near grade mile-post either 85 or 87, are graves, according to Mr H. Blake, a railroad employe residing at Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

There are shell-heaps at Old Metlakatla, near Prince Rupert, and at a number of places between Metlakatla and Prince Rupert. The one at Metlakatla may be seen in walking along the village street, and especially around the beach of the point east of the mission, where a vertical section, perhaps four feet high, is exposed. There are some petroglyphs on the rocks in the talus slope of the shell-heap on this point, at about the high-tide mark.

Between Metlakatla and Prince Rupert, as viewed from a launch in the stream, on the 30th of July, there could be seen, in various Indian gardens, what appeared to be ancient shell-heap material. One heap on the northern end of Digby island, perhaps two or three miles southeast of Metlakatla, is at the mouth of a small stream three or four feet wide. There is an Indian house as well as a garden on this heap. It is apparently three or four feet high, slopes toward the beach, and in places has been undercut by the surf.

A search of the surface revealed clam, mussel, cockle, and whelk shells, very black soil, fragments of burnt stones, and broken bones of human beings, as well as of fish and other animals. Among the clam shells were noticed those of *Saxidomus nuttalli* Conrad and *Tapes staminea* Conrad. In the talus slope, or where the shell-heap is undermined by the surf, two battered pebbles were found. The first (no. 16.1-408) is a hard stone, irregularly oval in form, one end smaller than the other and slightly battered. The larger end is somewhat more battered and shows where a chip has been detached. The second (no. 16.1-409) is a fragment of a pebble, a little more than twice as long as wide, and about twice as wide as thick. The lower end is slightly larger than the other and has been considerably battered. Both ends have been fractured, apparently from use. One side and two edges present the natural surface of the pebble. The edge where this piece has been broken from the pebble has been rounded by battering, and this battering at the upper end on one side has been carried over the natural side-edge of the fragment. This battering or pecking has been done apparently to bring the piece into form, while the battering and chipping of the ends is no doubt the result of use.

These two specimens may have been used as hand-hammers or pestles, but possibly they were used in a game, and are similar to



PETROGLYPHS ON THE BEACH BELOW HIGH-WATER MARK, NORTH OF WRANGEL, ALASKA.

specimens found at the mouth of the Klicksiwi river on Vancouver island.<sup>1</sup>

There is a shell-heap on the eastern side of the island southwest of Port Simpson. An Indian house and potato patch are on this heap. It is perhaps two feet in height and has been slightly undercut by the surf. On the surface I found nothing excepting clam, cockle, and mussel shells. On the mainland to the eastward is what appears from the water to be a larger shell-heap.

Two grooved granitic pebbles were found on the beach at Port Simpson. One of these (no. 16.1-410) is generally oval, and is grooved around the shorter circumference. The other (no. 16.1-

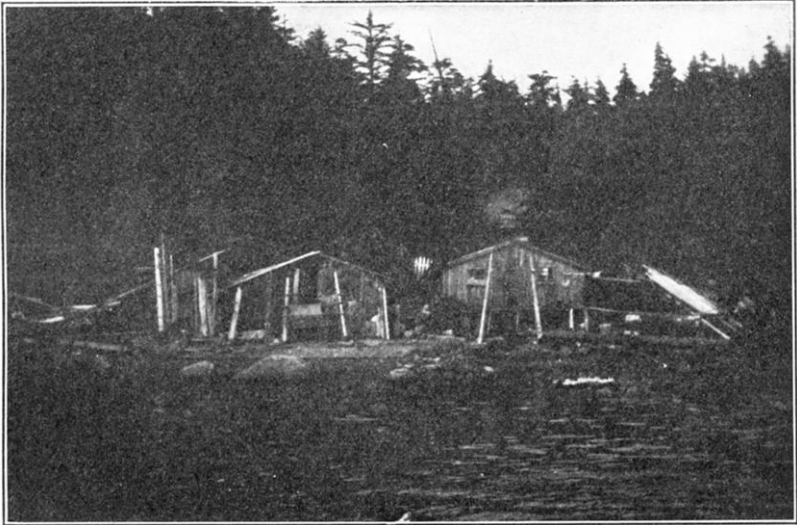


FIG. 101. — Tsimshian village on the southern side of Compton island, Steamer pass, south of Portland inlet.

411), also nearly oval and somewhat more symmetrical, besides being grooved around the lesser circumference has a groove running from near the middle of one side over the end almost to the groove on the other, and a short cross groove in the same end. The grooves, all of which were made by pecking, in both of these

<sup>1</sup> See Smith, *Archæological Investigations on the North Pacific Coast of America*, *Science*, N. S., April 14, 1899.

specimens appear to have been rather recently made. These objects are probably net-sinkers, of an archaic type, that have been made within recent times, perhaps within the last few years.

On the northeastern part of Bernie island, perhaps three miles northwestward from Port Simpson, is a shell-heap on which are an Indian house and a potato patch. It is near a natural arch rock. The heap is apparently not very high, perhaps not more than two feet. I visited it on August 1 and searched the surface but found no artifacts.

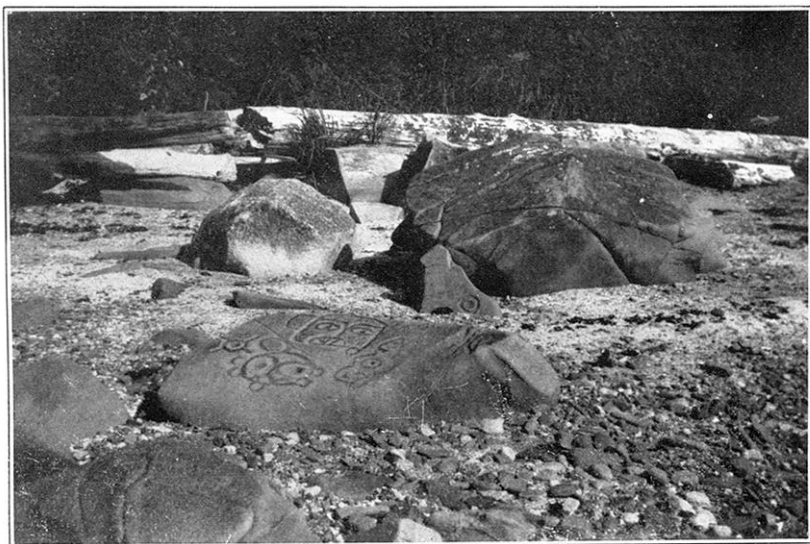
On the southern side of Compton island, in Steamer pass, just south of Portland inlet, is a Tsimshian village consisting of two or three houses (fig. 101). From the water the exposed soil of the garden appears to be the top of part of a shell-heap.

There is kitchen-midden material in the village at the Old eulichon fishing ground on the northern side of Nass river, a few miles above Kincolith. The river has cut into the bank in some places along here, and one may see strata deposited over snags, etc. In the cut section, however, I saw no artifacts, but exploration farther back from the river in the village would perhaps reveal important evidence in relation to the early inhabitants of this region and the migrations of the Tsimshian.

Along the beach near Wrangel, Alaska, between Mr Smith's house and the burial ground about two miles south of the town, below high-water mark, are a number of angular fragments of rock, bearing petroglyphs. These are rather faint and consisted of circles about six inches in diameter.

North of Wrangel, along the beach below high-water mark, from near the limit of the settlement here and there for about a mile to near the northern end of Wrangel island, may be seen petroglyphs on the fragments of beach rock (pl. xxvii, xxviii, fig. 102). Some of these have been figured by Lieut. George T. Emmons.<sup>1</sup> A few of them consist of two concentric circles, others apparently were designed to represent the human face, and some of these tend to be square rather than circular. One apparently represents the finback whale. The plainest of the grooves probably do not exceed a quarter of an

<sup>1</sup> George T. Emmons, *Petroglyphs in Southeastern Alaska*, *American Anthropologist*, N. S., X, no. 2, 1908, figs. 53, 62.



PETROGLYPHS ON THE BEACH NORTH OF WRANGEL, ALASKA

inch in depth ; others are shallower, or the surface of the rock is weathered away so that they can scarcely be seen. Some of the pictures remind us of those at Yellow island in Baynes sound, near Comox, and at Nanaimo.<sup>1</sup> The type of art shown, while not so characteristic of the Northwest Coast as that expressed in paintings and in carvings in wood, is typical and can be recognized as from this region ; and I am of the opinion that these Wrangel petroglyphs are more typical of the Northwest Coast as a whole than are those near Comox and Nanaimo.

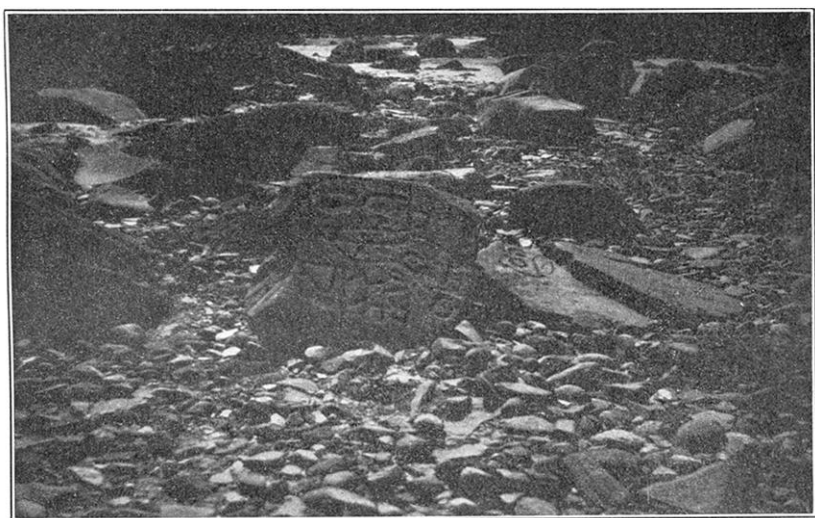


FIG. 102. — Petroglyph on the beach below high water north of Wrangel, Alaska.

At Yendestaque, about four miles above Haynes, on the military road following the Chilkat river, I saw kitchen-midden material to the east of the road, here close to the river. The earth is exposed, possibly by river cutting, along the base of the terrace on which the village stands.

Along the military road which follows the Chilkat river from Haynes, Alaska, through Klukwan to Porcupine, at a point below the eight-mile post, or less than eight miles above Haynes, I ob-

<sup>1</sup> Harlan I. Smith, *Archæology of the Gulf of Georgia and Puget Sound, Memoirs of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition*, vol. II, p. 6, fig. 115, also pl. x, and pl. XII, 1.



served a very thin layer of shell-heap material beneath about a foot of blackish soil. This was immediately to the east of the road, which at that point is about as close to the river as it could be built. Projecting from this heap was seen the top fragment of a large barbed harpoon point made of bone. The point (no. 16.1-414) is nearly oval in cross section and the three barbs are deeply undercut.

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